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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1674
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2626
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0474
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 000825

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

FOR EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: ANOTHER OPPOSITION BLOGGER DETAINED, BUT NOT UNDER
THE ISA

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 806

1. (U) Another opposition internet blogger, Syed Azidi Syed Aziz, was detained on September 17 under the Sedition Act for encouraging other Malaysians to fly the national flag upside-down during national day celebrations. Aziz first made his comments on August 3, stating that this action would signify his nation's political and economic distress, and the people's frustration. He is the second blogger to be charged under the Sedition Act, the first being Raja Petra Kamaruddin (reftel) in May 2008. Raja Petra is now being held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), which provides for detention without trial. On September 18, police obtained a 48-hour remand as they investigate. If found guilty, Syed faces up to three years in prison and a \$1,500 fine.

2. (U) Public reaction to the arrest of Syed Azidi, who is not a well-known national figure, was mixed. All major dailies carried the story, but unlike last week's ISA detentions they did not highlight criticism of the arrest. Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi described the act of encouraging people to fly the national flag upside-down as "evil". The vice-president of the opposition Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), Husam Musa, condemned the arrest, saying that this would worsen the current political climate.

3. (SBU) Comment: The timing of the arrest is questionable, given that Syed posted his comments on August 3. Although not as ominous as last week's ISA detentions, Syed's arrest sends another clear warning to the on-line community that the government of PM Abdullah seeks to rein in critical internet commentary, and will use heavy-handed legal tools to do so.
KEITH